

Take the pain out of brand planning

Brand planning season is upon us and, for many teams, it can feel like an overwhelming process filled with complex templates, endless revisions and cross-functional challenges.

However, brand planning doesn't have to be painful. By focusing on ambition, storytelling and engagement, teams can create meaningful and effective brand plans that inspire action.

In a recent webinar, Branding Science experts Ed Corbett and Simon Fogg shared the key rules to follow to achieve a successful brand planning process.



Read our article, below, to dive into their key insights; or, for a more in-depth look, [click here to watch the webinar, in full, on demand.](#)



The **five pitfalls to avoid** in brand planning

1



Lack of ambition

One of the most common issues in brand planning is simply not aiming high enough. Many teams default to incremental growth based on last year's numbers, without considering the true potential of their brand. Instead of tweaking old plans, teams should start by envisioning their desired future state, whether that's three, five or even ten years ahead. By working backwards from that ambitious vision, teams can set meaningful objectives and strategic goals.

2



Focusing on the product instead of the brand

A brand plan should be about more than just the product; it should focus on the emotional connection between the brand and its customers. Many teams unknowingly create 'product plans' rather than brand plans, failing to emphasise how their brand resonates with healthcare professionals, patients and other stakeholders. Defining the brand's identity and ensuring it permeates every aspect of the plan is crucial for success.

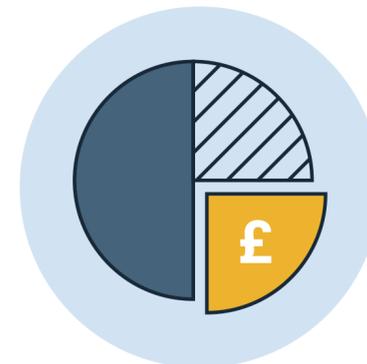
3



Over-focusing on competitors

Understanding the competitive landscape is essential, but it shouldn't dominate the planning process. Some teams become so fixated on competitor movements that they lose sight of their own brand's strengths and opportunities. Instead of just reacting to competitor strategies, teams should maintain a balance by keeping their primary focus on customers and the value their brand delivers.

4



Failing to define the market

A well-structured brand plan must start with a clear definition of the market. Too often, teams assume they know their market but fail to formally define it. This can lead to misaligned strategies and unrealistic objectives. Establishing a clear market definition – whether it's based on disease areas, treatment categories or other segmentation factors – provides a foundation for strategic planning and helps teams set achievable goals.

5



Not telling a compelling story

Brand plans that lack a narrative can feel disjointed and uninspiring. Effective brand planning requires storytelling – a logical, engaging flow that connects insights, strategy and execution. A strong brand plan should take the reader on a journey, explaining the brand's purpose, market position and long-term vision in a way that excites and aligns stakeholders. Without a clear story, even the most well-researched plans can fall flat.

Five rules to build brand plans that engage and inspire



1

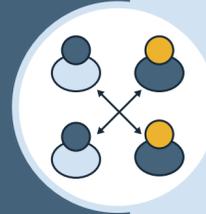
Treat brand planning like a launch



Instead of treating brand planning as an annual checklist exercise, approach it with the same rigour and enthusiasm as a product launch. This means investing time in strategic thinking, setting ambitious goals and ensuring every team member understands their role in bringing the plan to life.

2

Engage your cross-functional team early



A great brand plan is never built in isolation. Successful plans require input from commercial, medical, regulatory, finance and market access teams. Bringing these stakeholders into the process early keeps everyone aligned and ensures the final plan reflects a holistic business strategy. Moreover, it creates a sense of shared ownership, making the execution more seamless.

3

Build an emotional connection to your brand



Brand planning isn't just about data and forecasts – it's about passion. Teams that deeply understand and connect with their brand's purpose create more compelling and impactful plans. This emotional connection can come from speaking to patients, understanding their needs and seeing, first hand, the difference the brand makes in their lives.

4

Tell a story that sticks



A well-crafted brand story makes the plan easier to communicate – and more memorable. This is particularly important when presenting to senior management or engaging regional teams. Instead of overwhelming stakeholders with endless slides and data points, distil the plan into a concise, compelling narrative that highlights the brand's vision, strategy and impact.

5

Use templates as tools, not as the plan



Templates are meant to support brand planning, not define it. Too often, teams start the planning process by filling out templates rather than thinking strategically. Templates should be used to structure thinking, but never to replace the storytelling and strategic decision-making that make a brand plan truly effective.

Final thoughts

Brand planning should be an exciting, inspiring process and not burdensome. By avoiding common pitfalls and focusing on ambition, storytelling and team engagement, marketing teams can create brand plans that drive real impact.

If you feel genuinely excited and connected to your plan, the chances are that your colleagues and stakeholders will, too. So, as you embark on your brand planning journey, take pride in your work, think big ... and, *tell a story that resonates.*

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